

Bruce Nauman: Models

Bruce Nauman thinks in terms of models – potential forms – and that is why drawing plays such a central role in his work and in this exhibition. Drawings reveal the essence; they indicate what is conceivable. Drawings and models alike are stylistically unbound and open up the realms of imagination.

In the late 1970s, Nauman created models for subterranean spaces. Circle is the first model – an underground tunnel with a diameter of up to 200 metres. As it was unfeasible to build, the model served as an inspirational driver to imagine the space. It shows only the outer form. How would the space look from within, and how would one act inside it? The circle was followed by triangle and a square; these three geometric works are shown here together for the first time. The fourth model, Equilateral Triangle, consists of three axial lines arranged in a star shape, whereby the point of intersection divides them into different lengths. What Nauman was interested here was the different psychological effects of the forms: the triangle creates an uncomfortable space, whereas the circle and the square suggest a safe space. The models are cast in iron and appear as definitive, fully-formed sculptures. Yet it is not stability that Nauman seeks here, but instead the potential of the model. He is interested in the ambiguity of appearances, and in the interim spaces that open up between the real and the imagined.

The same can be said of his works with hands, which, in this exhibition, form an intimate counterpoint to the large-scale models. Hands are not just functional instruments; they can also be the object of an action – as in a piano piece based on finger exercises, or in pairs of hands shown intertwined. These works, too, are models that tear asunder what we take for granted.